EARLY IRON AGE SPREAD INTO NORTHERN MOZAMBIQUE: REVISING THE DATA FROM THE MOZAMBIQUE ANTHROPOLOGICAL MISSIONS (1946)[1]

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Abstract: The Mozambique Anthropological Missions of 1946 provided the opportunity for Professor Santos Júnior to excavate two important Early Iron Age archaeological sites in Northern Mozambique: the Riane Rock-Shelter, in Nampula Province, and Malessane in the Gurué mountains of Zambezia Province. Both remained unpublished and unknown till a first reference was made in Conceição Rodrigues PhD dissertation (2004). The importance of both sites for the understanding of Early Iron Age Eastern Stream Bantu migrations is here addressed in comparison with other archaeological sites either from Mozambique or other surrounding countries.

Keywords: Early Iron Age, Mozambique, 4th Anthropological Mission.

Resumo: Durante a quarta campanha da Missão Antropológica de Moçambique (1946) Santos Júnior teve a oportunidade de escavar dois importantes sítios arqueológicos no Norte de Moçambique contendo evidências de ocupação na Primeira Idade do Ferro: o abrigo de Riane (Província de Nampula) e o povoado de Malessane nas montanhas do Gurué (Província da Zambézia). Ambos permaneceram inéditos até uma primeira abordagem na tese de doutoramento de Conceição Rodrigues (2004). Abordamos aqui a importâncias de ambos os sítios para a compreensão das migrações Banto, no seu ramo oriental e tendo em atenção os dados hoje disponíveis quer para Moçambique quer para os países limítrofes.

Palavras-chave: Idade do Ferro Inferior, Moçambique, 4ª Missão Antropológica.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH RESULTS: RIANE ROCK-SHELTER

Riane Rock-Shelter is located in Monte Riane, an inselberg situated in northern Nampula Province, and its coordinates are 40º 9' 20'' East and 13º 43' 30'' South (Fig. 1). An overhang at a height of 3.5m protects a 4m large panel with LSA and Iron Age paintings both realistic (humans and animals) and geometric.

[1] Este texto não segue o Novo Acordo Ortográfico.

Figure 1. Location of the sites.

The first archaeological intervention in Riane Rock-Shelter occurred during the 4th Campaign (1946) of the Mozambique Anthropological Mission, when Santos Júnior excavated an area of 3.5mx4.2m producing a sequence with lower levels with LSA quartz artefacts (now being studied by Daniela Matos) and an upper level with EIA pottery sherds, an iron fragment and charcoal that was radiocarbon dated – ICEN-133 1870 ± 35 BP = 69-233 cal AC for a 2σ probability. Surface findings of recent glazed ware testify to a long frequency of the place. Santos Júnior also produced a trace copy of the paintings.

The recovered materials were transported to Portugal, left mostly perfunctorily published (Júnior, 1946, 1947, 1950 and 1952) and thought to be lost to science (Adamowicz, 1987, p. 48) till its recovery by Maria da Conceição Rodrigues and its housing in overseas collections of the IICT.

The late seventies and early eighties of the twentieth century saw a renewed interest in the Archaeology of Nampula Province by Eduardo Mondlane University researchers. Some painted rock-shelters and the littoral were studied by Ricardo Teixeira Duarte who was mainly interested in the Swahili period (Duarte, 1993). Paul Sinclair and Teresa Cruz e Silva then excavated, in 1978, twenty new sites in the districts of Murrupula, Meconta

and Mussuril (Sinclair, 1993). Finally, in 1981, Adamowicz, integrated in a joint project with the Swedish Heritage Service (Riksantikvariämbetet), addressed the problem of the interface between the LSA and the EIA, re-excavating Riane Rock-Shelter (fig. 2), confirming Santos Junior stratigraphy, and studying the paintings (Adamowicz, 1987).

Figure 2. Mozambique Riane Excavations 1981/1982. cf. Adamowicz, L. (1981-2).

In 2004, Conceição Rodrigues incorporates the data from Riane and Malessane in her PhD thesis (Rodrigues, 2004).

MALESSANE

The site of Malessane was discovered in August 1946 due to the opening of a field road near Gurué in the Zambezia Province, its precise location and coordinates were lost (fig.1). The abundant presence of what was to be characterized as EIA pottery sherds was brought to the attention of Santos Júnior who was able to excavate two small trenches on both sides of the road which construction destroyed much of the site (fig.3). Besides the pottery, also iron slag and charcoal were recovered. The charcoal provided a radiocarbon date (ICEN-132 1740 ± 40) calibrated to 212-409 cal AC for a 2σ probability.

Figure 3. Malessane 1946. Photo Santos Júnior.

THE POTTERY COLLECTIONS

The pottery collections provide the most informative evidence from both sites. The sherds preserved at the IICT collections comprise, for Riane, 432 fragments corresponding to a MNI[2] of 21 reconstructed recipients (at least partially) and for Malessane 97 fragments corresponding to 10 recipients (MNI).

The analytical treatment of the pottery followed the norms proposed by Senna-Martinez (1989) and Luís (2010).

The pottery paste is mainly compact (67% at Riane and 100% at Malessane), the texture is foliated in all cases, non-plastic elements in the paste (mainly small quartz grains) are mostly present in the larger vessels (48% in Riane and 20% in Malessane), the cooking presents mainly a oxidizing of the pastes (90% either in Riane or Malessane), surface finish is simply smoothened in all cases that could be observed[3] and in half the Malessane sample it happened over a good slip finish.

Seven vessel types could be defined (figs. 4, 5, 6 and 7): (1) necked pots; (2) shallow ovoid pots with closed mouth; (3) shallow ovoid pots with a slightly necked closed mouth; (4) deep bowls; (5) carinated bowls; (6) bi-conic vessels; (7) bowl with everted rim.

Riane has the larger typological variation, with all types except 3 present, while at Malessane only types 1 and 3 are present. In both samples the majority of the identifiable vessels belong to type 1, the necked pots (43% in Riane and 90% in Malessane), the other

[2] Minimum Number of Individuals.
[3] Surfaces conservation of pottery sherds is not always good, mainly in the Riane sample.

types are only represented by one exemplar each (5%) in the Riane sample while the Malessane only has one other exemplar of type 3 (10%).

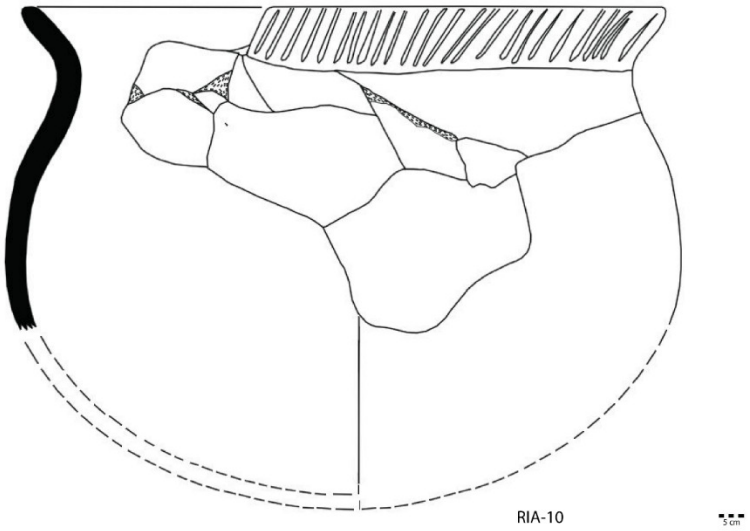

Figure 4. Large necked pot from Riane.

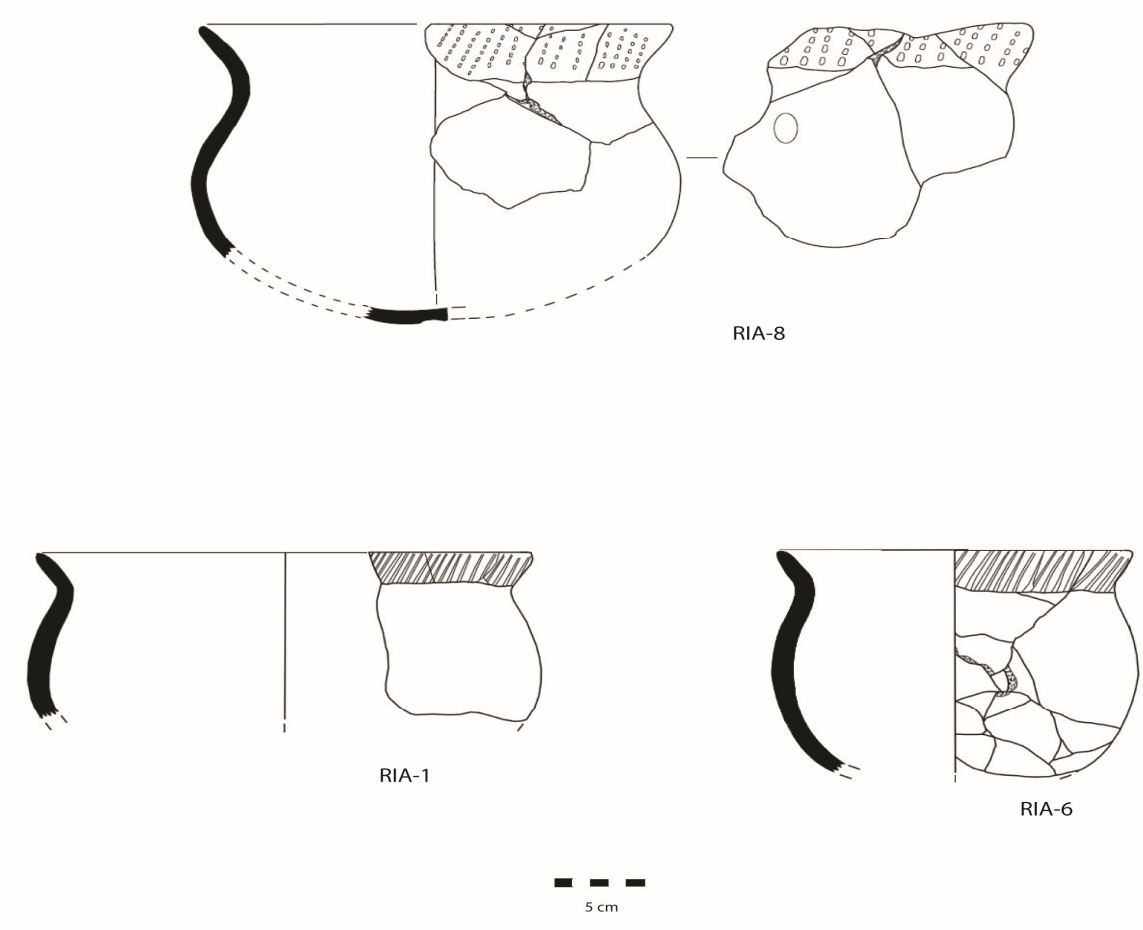

Figure 5 – Necked pots from Riane.

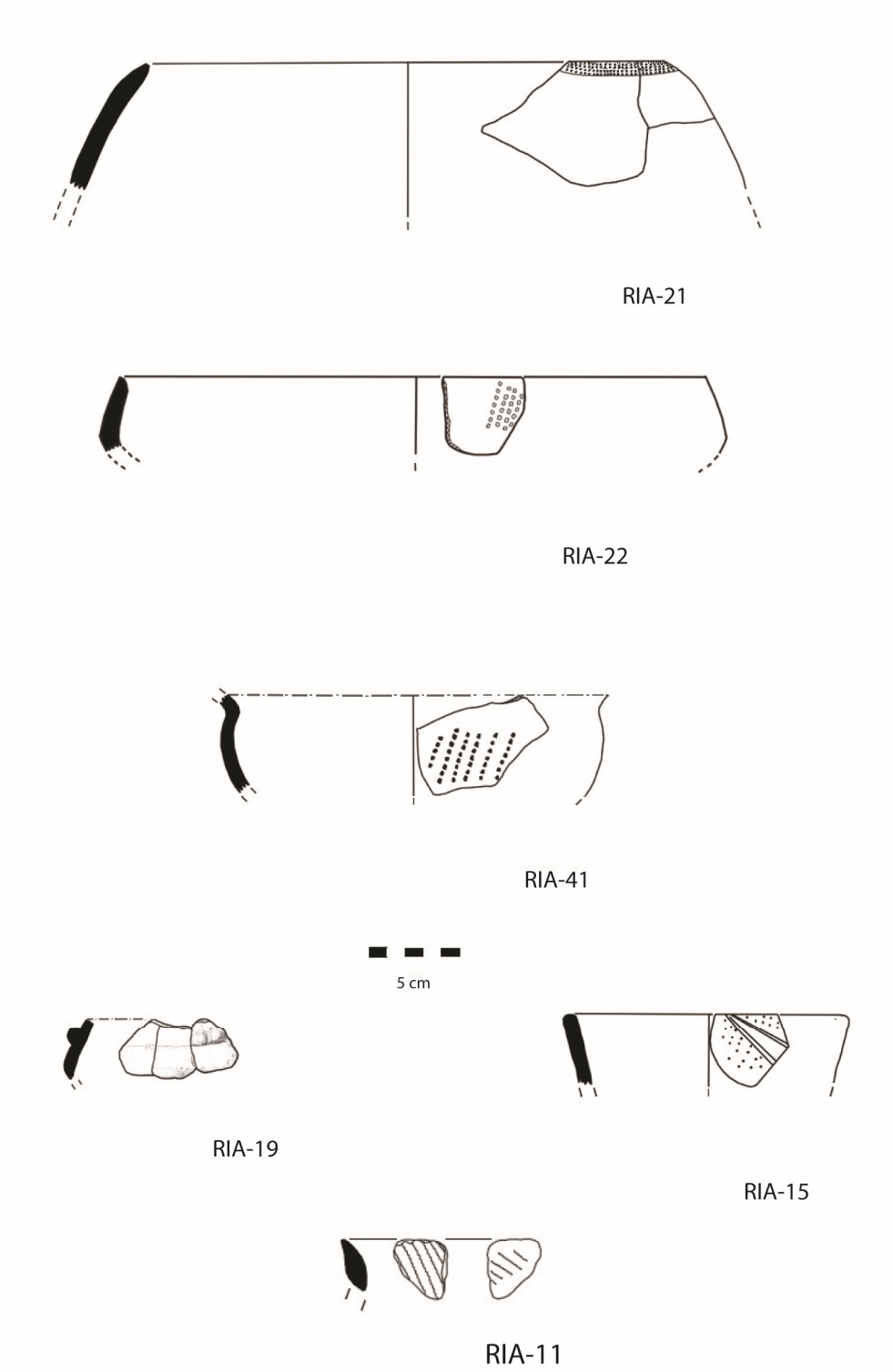

Figure 6. Pottery from Riane: Type 2 - RIA 21; Type 4 - RIA 15; Type 5 - RIA 22; Type 6 - RIA 19; Type 7 - RIA 41. RIA 11 is the rim decorated with shell impressions.

Decoration also differs between the sites. For the necked pots, while the 9 Riane ones (Figs. 4 and 5) have simple everted rims, decorated either with oblique incised lines (6) or similar lines of impressed quadrangular stamps (3), the rims of the 9 Malessane pots tend to be thickened and fluted or bevelled, with bands of much smaller and regular

impressed quadrangular stamps underlined by a simple incised line or line of impressions (Fig. 7). One small rim fragment from Riane (without type) is decorated with oblique shell stamps (fig. 6 – RIA-11) very similar to the type of decoration known from the Monapo tradition (Fig. 8 – Sinclair *et al*., 1993) probably referring to littoral contacts.

Fluted is also used as decoration in the body of Malessane type 3 only exemplar (Fig.7 – MAL-10).

The formal characteristics of the pottery from Riane correspond well to what Adamowicz (1987) defined as the Nampula Tradition (Fig.9), as a regional development from the Kwale branch of the EIA Eastern Stream (Huffman, 1989: fig.3). The rim decoration of the necked pots comprises both exemplars with bands of oblique incised lines, as in Adamowicz Nampula A, and bands of oblique lines of impressed quadrangular stamps, as in Adamowicz Nampula B (Sinclair *et al*., 1993: fig. 24.6). The rim fragment with oblique shell stamps is very similar to the type of decoration known from the Monapo tradition which is grossly contemporary to Nampula B and considered to have proto-Swahili influences (Adamowicz, 1987; Sinclair *et al*., 1993: fig. 24.9).

Malessane pottery, while with general similarities to Riane, is much closer to the Nkope branch of the EIA Eastern Stream (Huffman, 1989a and 1989b). The rim decoration of the necked pots with fluted and bevelled rims by a band of very carefully made small and regular impressed quadrangular stamps points to a closer association with that more inland branch.

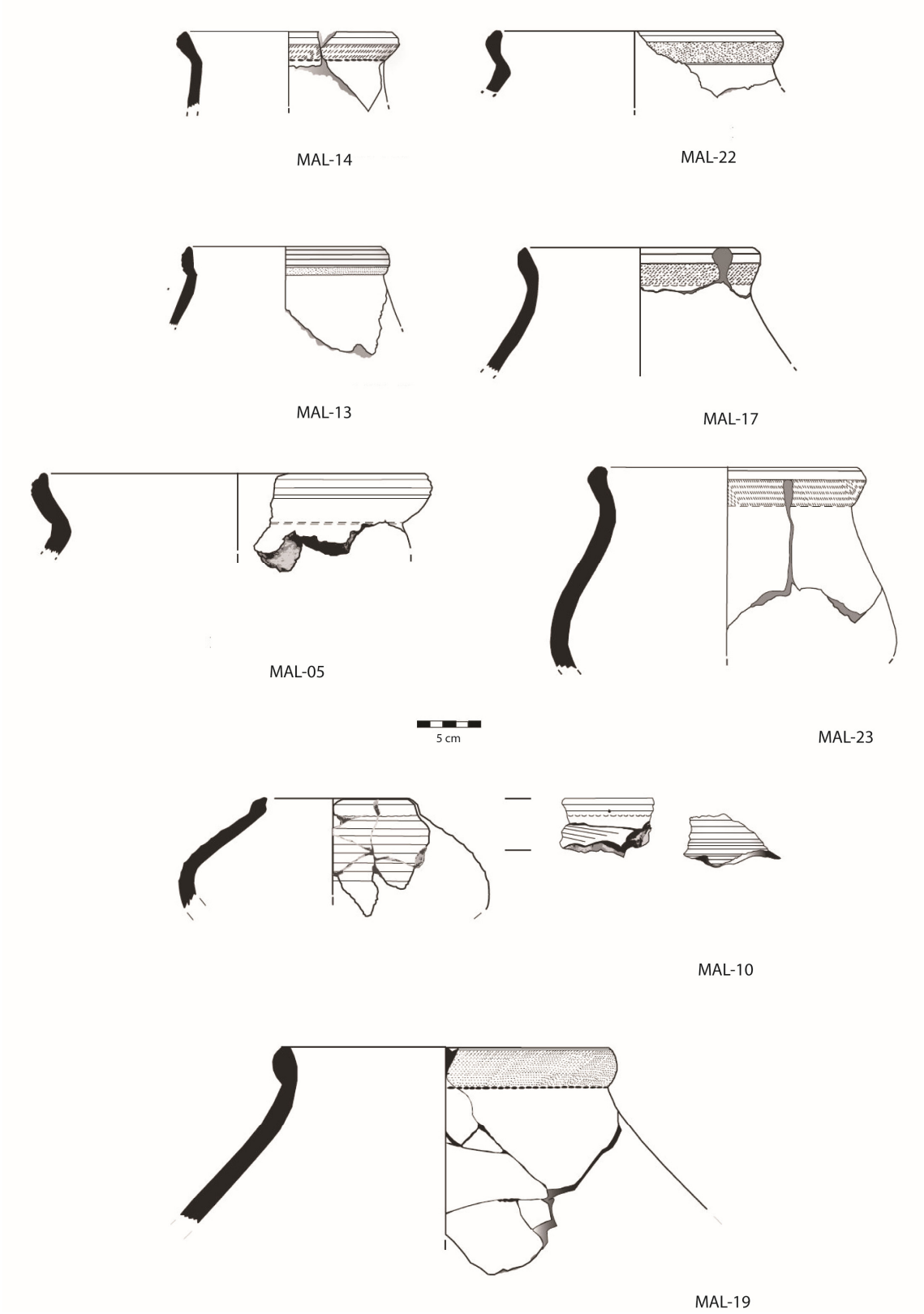

Figure 7. Pottery from Malessane: Type 1 - MAL 5, 13, 14, 19, 22, 23; Type 3 - MAL 10.

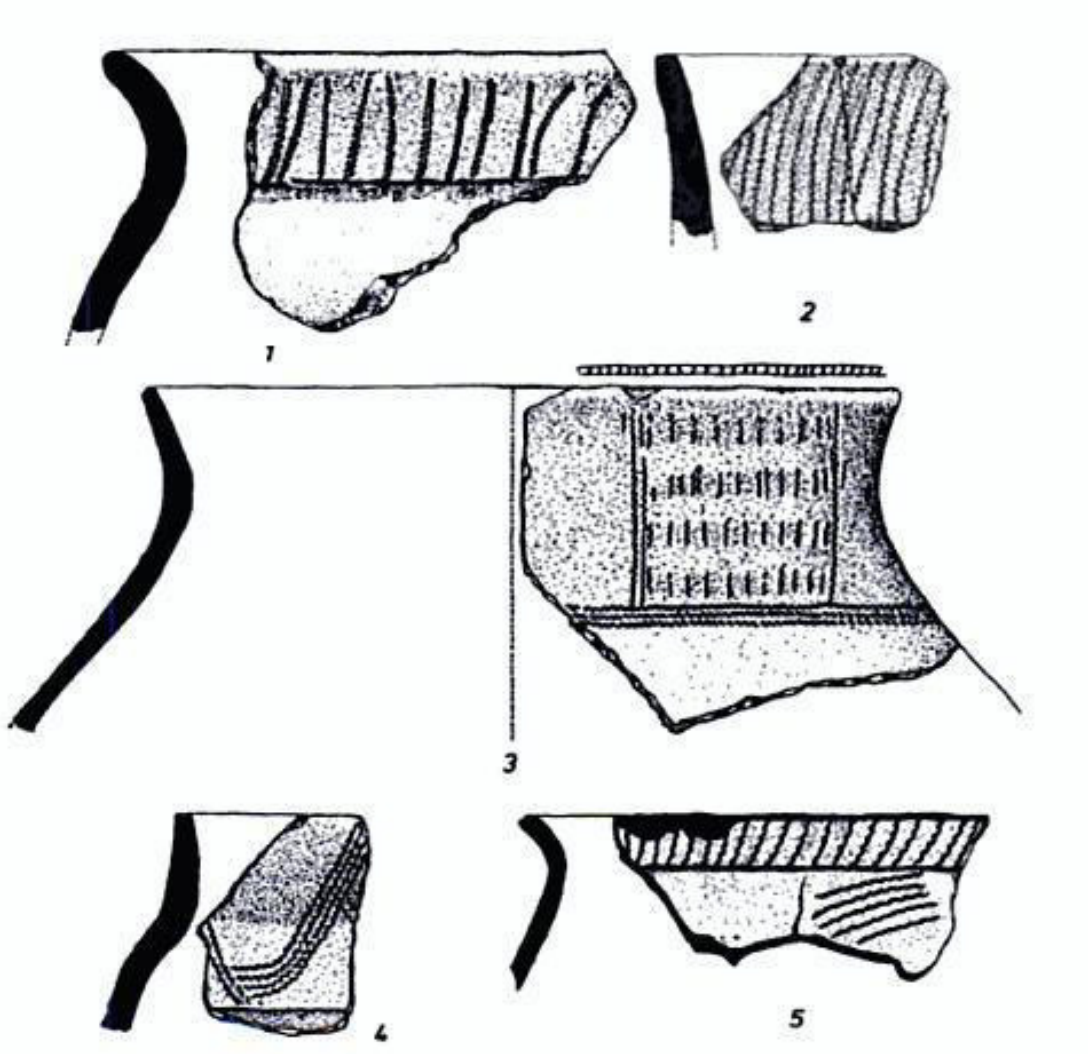

Figure 8. Monapo tradition pottery, according to Sinclair, *et al.* 1993.

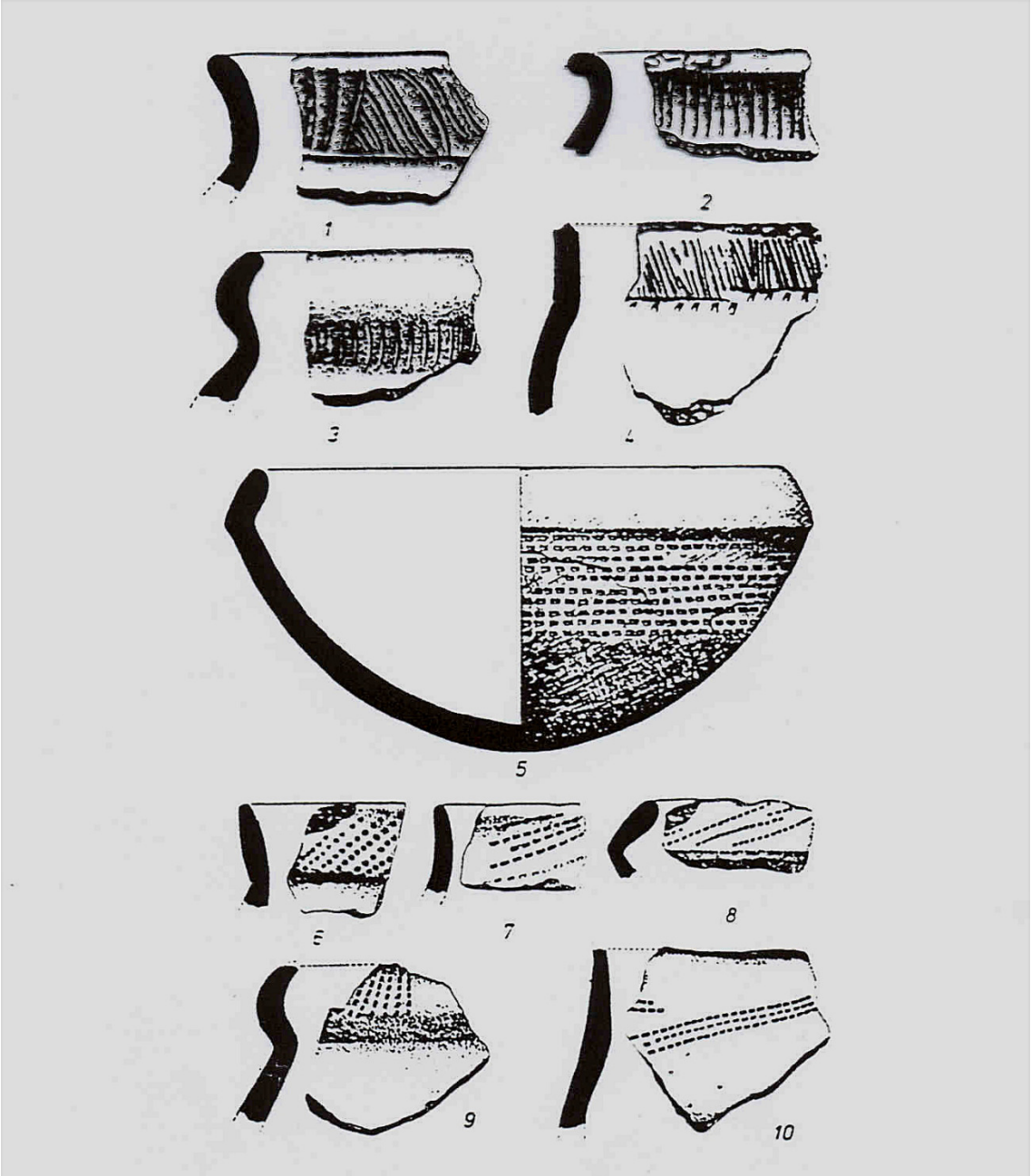

Figure 9. Nampula tradition pottery, according to Sinclair, *et al.* 1993.

EIA MOZAMBICAN SITES IN THE CONTEXT OF EASTERN STREAM BANTU MIGRATIONS

The evidence from the two sites here referred to allow us to reconsider some hypothesis for the southwards movement of the EIA Kwale branch migration (Fig. 10). Here is important namely the evidence from Riane, since attribution of Malessane pottery to the Nkope branch puts it into another more inland route.

Figure 10. Main Eastern Stream EIA sites in the Mozambican coastal plains and proposed migration route.

In 1975, and based on the evidence for EIA contact and presence within the Southern Mozambique coast LSA shell-middens (Senna-Martinez, 1976) one of us has proposed the hypothesis of a Kwale branch migration route southwards through the Mozambique coastal plains which other researchers thought unlikely (Klapwijk and Huffman, 1996).

The evidence for interference and mingling of Bantu migrants and LSA (probably San) populations is now extensive for the province of Nampula (Adamowicz, 1987), the data from Riane Rock-Shelter reinforces it namely through the EIA pottery presence, as well as the continuity of the paintings and space utilization as a sacred place till the ethnographic present as Santos Júnior documented still in 1946.

The results of recent work around the Zambezi delta (Madiquida, 2006) with the finds at Lumbi of EIA pottery with Kwale/Nampula similarities provide another step in the Kwale branch route southwards.

Another point in the southwards journey can well be the area around Vilanculos bay where a few sherds of Matola type pottery (Silva, 1976) are reported at Ponta Dundo and Vilanculos sites (Morais, 1988, pp.73-4).

The presence of Matola type pottery in the Southern Mozambique coast shell-middens (Senna-Martinez, 1976) linked to the large data already published for Matola type sites around Maputo (Morais, 1988) provides the last step of the route above mentioned.

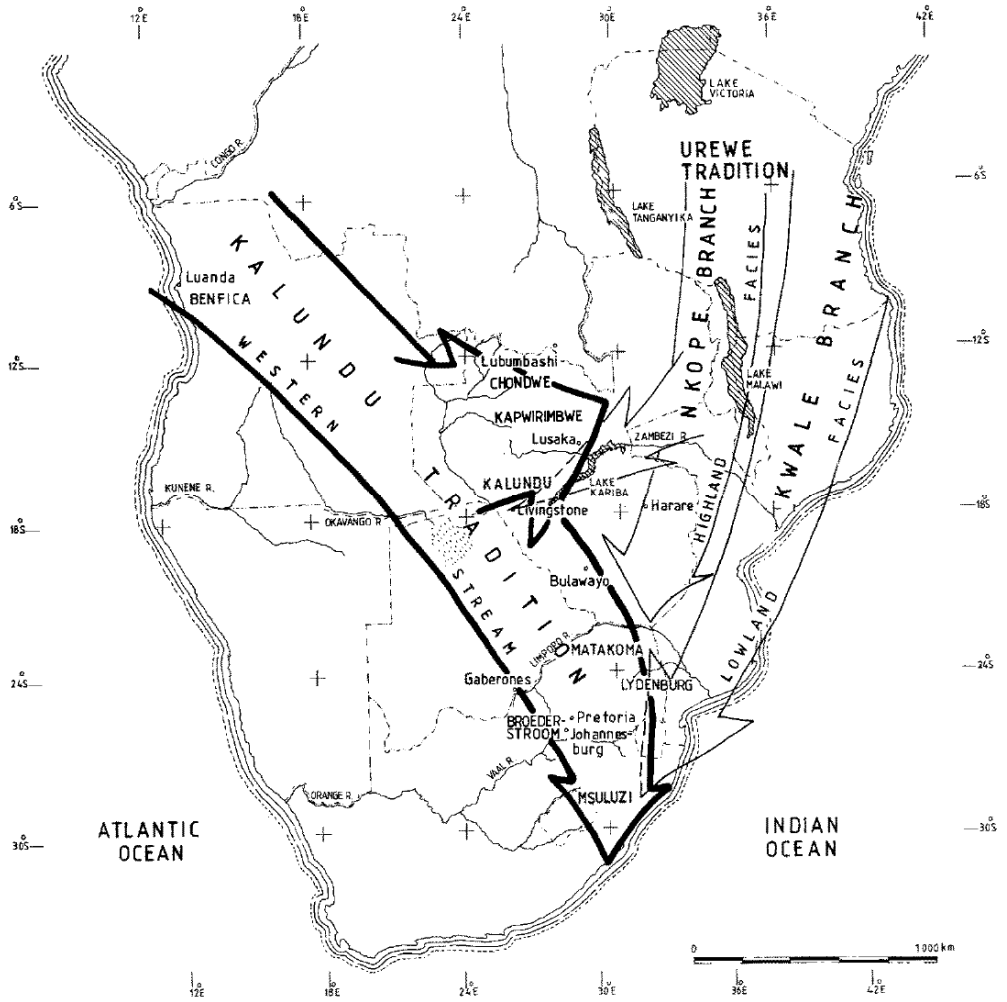

Figure 11. The EIA Bantu migrations according to Huffman (1989a and 1989b).

After Huffman (Fig. 11 – cf. Huffman, 1989a and 1989b) established the differential dynamics and composition of the two streams (Eastern and Western or Urewe and Kalundo Traditions – Huffman, 1989b, p.160) of the second phase of Bantu migrations, the present data available for Mozambican littoral areas seem to reinforce the idea that a Kwale branch migration route southwards through the Mozambique coastal plains is not only possible but probable.

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